



Utility Patent Application

of

Carol Ann Trufant

for

An Intergroup Working Model for Social Conflict Resolution

Cross-Reference to Related Applications – Not Applicable

Statement Regarding Federally Sponsored Research or Development – Not Applicable

Reference to Microfiche Appendix: - Not Applicable

Copyright/Mask Work Rights

“A portion of the disclosure of this patent document contains material which is subject to (copyright or mask work) protection. The (copyright or mask work) owner has no objection to facsimile reproduction by anyone of the patent document or the patent disclosure, as it appears in the Patent or Trademark Office patent file or records, but otherwise reserves all (copyright or mask work) rights whatsoever.” Per 37 CFR § 1.71(e)

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to apparatus and methods for conflict resolution. More particularly, the present invention relates to a space divided and organized to facilitate conflict resolution and methods for addressing and resolving conflicts.

Background of the Invention:

Clinical (consulting) psychology is the field of endeavor pertaining to my invention. More than 13 years ago, I became interested in Tavistock group relations while co-leading a psychoanalytic object relations (Kleinian) group for 1 year during my general internship at Neuropsychiatric Institute at UCLA, 7-74 through 6/75.

5

Generally, group relations work is concerned with studying how group and individual dynamics in organizations affect each other in relationship to work completion.

Participation and staff consultation in said conferences afforded me more experience and appreciation of the plausibility of using different ways of relating to others and resolving conflict.

This interest coupled with my prior and continuing one in various systems such as family, community, ecological, structural, paradoxical, and 'living', the latter most closely related to Tavistock group relations, all contributed to my current view of possibilities for inter- (intra-) group workable collaborations.

In December 1987, I responded to a call for papers and applied to present my model at the First International Symposium on Group Relation's Contributions to Social and Political Issues sponsored by Tavistock Institute of Human Relations & the A.K. Rice Institute, to be held at Keble College, Oxford University, England. Between 1987 and 1989, I submitted by model/idea to at least 2 other Tavistock regional chapters for conference or workshop presentation in San Francisco (GREX), and Boston (The Boston Group). In 1989-1990, I applied for a NATO fellowship and a Grubb Institute, London Sponsorship; 10 yrs later, my revised proposal finally was accepted as a poster session, at the American Psychological Assn's Community Psychology Division's (27) Society for Community Research & Action's (SCRA) Biennial Conference at Yale, June 10, 1999.

The following copies are enclosed: Review of Literature is enclosed in extra material such as Proposal (5<sup>th</sup> version) w/review of literature, 11-28-1989; the poster session post print; Yale program pages showing my listing as presenter; other uses for model; Plan of research, 01/00;

model as design, 2/00; model as setting for quality circles; p. 160 (161), Chris Argyris'  
Overcoming Organizational Defenses.

### Brief Summary of the Invention

5

The purpose of the present invention is to allow participants to practice taking personal responsibility for behavior and resolution of differences (conflict) and problem solving through interactive learning. Adults have difficulty authorizing themselves and others to take on leadership roles, often resulting in a lack of resolution of group issues, i.e., rudeness, low work productivity, workplace violence, and community (world) tension. Time, role, and formality affect our propensity to hoard power, project anxieties and dilemmas about exercising power, and taking responsibility for change, across and within groups. Movement outside of one's framework, either individual, intra-, or intergroup will enhance recognition of other's views, beliefs, and provide an environment more accessible to dialogues toward collaborative problem solving.

15

Views of negotiating conflicts consists of three concepts: 1) controlling projections and splitting (discounting); 2) Recognition; and 3) Reframing. Basically, bridging a gap resolves splitting; one then can see (recognize) the persons across that 'divide'; thereafter, different perspectives and collaborations have opportunities to be formed.

20

### Hypotheses:

1) An open theatre method will provide optimum opportunities for face-to-face negotiating, understanding others' points of view by experiencing their tasks in role, and reducing stereotypic inferences. Time will be a significant factor for the success of conflict resolution (Mangham & Overington, 1987; Miller, 1985; Wall & Blum, 1991; Lewin, 1997; Cordes, 1986; Rubin & Freidland, 1986; Coombs, 1987; Churchill, 1989; Stuart, 1988; Miller & Rice, 1967; Schein, 1996; Friedmand, 1994).

30

2) Successful Conflict resolution is more likely when the presence of psychological “splitting” both within and between conflict groups is recognized. “Splitting” describes a process whereby groups, subgroups and individual project onto others their own dilemmas and anxieties about exercising authority or wielding power (Klein, 1971; De Board, 1978; Horowitz, 1985; Klein, M, 1985; Lewin, 1997; White, 1966; Katz, 1988; Klein, 1985; Keen, 1982; Trufant, 1983; Rather, 1987; Fiske, 1993; Khaleelee & Miller, 1985; Hogget & Lousada, 1985).

3) Conflict between groups lessens in direct proportion to the degree that these groups address conflict within themselves. (Hassner, 1975; Chattopadhyay, 1989; Kipnis, 1984; Miller, 1985A; Kets de Vries, 1991; Alderfer & Klein, 1985; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984; Kernberg, 1985; Sievers, 1995; Hom, 1989; Hirshhorn, 1997; Leving, 1997; Conflict and Cooperation Among Groups: An experimental Workshop in the Tavishotck Tradition, 1987; Van Dijk, 1987; Wilson, 1996).

4) To recognize “splitting” in the groups with which they are involved, people need an opportunity to move outside of them in order to reframe their picture of what is happening (Lawrence, 1985; Watzlawick, 1974; Boszormenji-Nagy, 1973; Minuchin, 1974; Baldwin, 1982; Dooley, 1997; Eisold, 1985; Bion, 1985; Miller & Rice, 1967; Argyris, 1967; Lewin, 1997; Klein, 1998; Verhofstadt-Deneve, 1995; Noe & Wilk, 1993).

5) Reframing of conflicts will move along lines purported by Coombs, 1987: Type I – Persons must choose between two opposites: Type II – Persons who desire two different things must choose only one; Type III – Persons who want the same thing, must settle for different things (Also see Deutsch, 1977; Lewin, 1997; Strodbeck, 1951).

The present invention combines the information found in the prior research and combines them into a new format to resolve conflicts. Use of open process vs. hidden (backstage) agreement/deal making to resolve conflicts, disagreements, stalemates, etc is key. Everyone in attendance has the potential of contributing, being recognized as such, and participating (or not) in reframing questions, issues, etc, toward resolution – hard work. The model lessens the possibility of betrayals, and covert actions, because the whole-process-action has to be observed

to be valid as basis for agreement. There is potential for development of trust over time. The method of the invention is as follows:

Subjects will be part of a large interdependent group made up of 3 intergroups: The

- 5 Community/The Workers (C/W); The Politicians/Top Management (P/TM); The Activists/Middle Management (A/MM). Participants will be randomly assigned to groups. Three volunteers will act as 'chorus' (consultants).

- 10 The setting will be formed of a middle group space, and surrounding areas-2 graduated stages; swinging doors as permeable boundaries, separating two different areas:

Boundary Space (BOS) #1, the isles within each group, and surrounding the middle group, and BOS #2, a pace, like a stage where all can observe. Conflicts not resolved in BOS #1 will move into this space.

- 15 Procedurally, differences of opinion will emerge around one topic including the Middle East Situation, a work situation, a school/adolescent/parent conflict, etc.

- 20 Three volunteers per topic will act as the 'chorus' responsible for giving continual running commentary. They are to help me reframe disagreements to be resolved in BOS 1 or 2, as needed.

- 25 Time Needed: 3½ hours: 30 minutes to explain and get everyone assigned to a group and seated; 30 minutes for the event to occur; another 45 minutes for all group members to change groups, and continue, e.g., the A/MM become C/TW, and the latter, the P/TM, and this last group, the A/MM. The exercise will continue with participants in different roles; new volunteers will replace the chorus, and maybe me. At the end, 60 minutes will be reserved for discussion of this event by members about various roles they assumed during the training (review) and how these roles might affect their behavior towards authority and leadership outside of this training  
30 (application). An extra 20 minutes will be available for debriefing as necessary. Time will be allotted for follow-up issues as indicated.

Evaluation: A 1 page Likert-type questionnaire will be distributed;

Completion Time: @ 15 minutes

5 Brief Description of the Several Views of the Drawing

Fig. 1 is a top plan view of a surface pattern (model) applied to a setting, i.e. room in a building (workplace) for use with adults; can use as model for quality circle, also.

- 10 Fig. 2 is a top plan view of a surface pattern (model) applied to a setting, i.e., room in a building (school or church) for use with adolescents, parents, teachers, administrators.

Fig. 3 is a top plan view of a surface pattern (model) applied as the design for a building or part thereof.

15

Detailed Description of the Invention

Method

- 20 There will be three intergroups: The middle group will represent the Community/The Workers (C/W); The groups on either side (they are accountable to . . .) will consist of Politicians/Top Management (P/TM) on one side, and Activists/Middle Management (A/MM) on the other. Participants will be randomly assigned to groups.

- 25 The setting will include two raised stages and swinging doors representing permeable boundaries. These doors will bind two different areas.

- 1) Boundary Space (BOS) #1: The isles within each group, i.e., the boundary each around the middle group shared on each side by group #1 & #3; two people from 2 to 3 different groups can  
30 meet in a common place in this space, around the middle group.

2) BOS #2. A space down by and a distance from the middle group, away from all groups, as if on a stage, for all to observe. Conflicts that cannot be resolved in BOS #1 will move into this space.

## 5 Instruments/Setting

A large room will be used, one that can hold three large (N=15) with at least 5 in each inter-connecting group in a concentric space with a raised-type seating pattern not unlike that of bleachers or a theater in the round. There will be vestibular boundary spaces, “gates” with swing capacity for ‘in and out’ room for negotiating between the C/TW and P/TM on one end, and the C/TW and A/MM on the other side. Swinging gates will also be present at each end of the vestibules which will spill out onto different areas. The bleachers will form semi-circles on either end of the groups. The purpose of having this space on either end is to provide room to negotiate, and if necessary, to move into a larger boundary space/reframe area – i.e., from BOS #1 to BOS #2, near the space where the original conflict flared-up. We can then trace the difference in climate as we move away from old and into new frames. Within the boundary space arena (BOS #2), there will be 2 to 3 comfortable chairs, a big, round rug in the middle (conducive to sitting on, if desired), and perhaps 1 or 2 throw rugs. The very best setting for this exercise might be one of those OSS Assessment of Men country-type houses or barns. A gym, any large room, or even a town square will do; a theatre-in-the-round would be ideal. What is needed is a holding environment wherein negative energy can be contained by the staff and reworked or reframed into positive energy.

## Procedures:

The even will consists of 3-tiered discussions representing differences of opinion re events of the day that have been reviewed in the BOSs. Topics could include: The Kosovo, or Syrian/Israeli situation with the government, military, and the residents; a work situation wherein a top manager, supervisor, and worker disagree on where responsibility lies in addressing an informal grievance against a supervisor or worker for an on the job mistake; or who should go to in-

service training from a particular workteam. Topics will be chosen in order of preference by consensus of total group.

Three volunteers, one from each group chosen by me using a random count, will act as a  
5 'chorus' with responsibility for giving continually running commentary to me on the action,  
openly after discussing amongst themselves what themes are going on at the moment. They are  
to help me reframe disagreements that cannot be resolved 'in place'. So if yelling or discussion  
become too much or counterproductive across the room. These conflicts will be brought into  
areas as described above. I will be moving from area to area to facilitate BOS #1 & #2  
10 resolutions. At any time, I believe my presence is not needed, I will retreat. The chorus and I  
may or may not be in agreement.

The pace of this event will be rapid, theoretically. The total time needed: 3½ hours; 30 minutes  
to explain and get everyone assigned to a group and seated; 30 minutes for the event to occur;  
15 another 45 minutes for all group members to change groups and continue, e.g., the A/MM  
become C/TW, and the latter, the P/TM, and this last group, the A/MM. The exercise will  
continue with participants in different roles; new volunteers will replace the chorus, and maybe  
me.

## 20 Review and Application:

At the end, 60 minutes will be reserved for discussion of this event by members about various  
roles they assumed during the training (review) and how these roles might affect their behavior  
towards authority and leadership outside of this training (application). An extra 20 minutes will  
25 be available for debriefing as necessary.

First, review will take place across the larger intergroups for 20 minutes to insure comprehension  
of the process. Thereafter, each intergroup will break-up into small groups of 5-8 persons, and  
continue the review process for 20 minutes (Gosling, 1967). I shall be available to consult to the  
30 small groups when requested. Room space will be used as necessary for quiet. Another 20



minutes will be used for the application phase. Debriefing will take place during a final 20 minute period; extra time will be available for discussion of follow-up issues.

Evaluation:

5

A 1 page Likert-type form will be distributed to participants at the end of the day to discover what they have learned about taking individual responsibility around issues of authority, fellowship, and collaboration, i.e., what was discovered re intra- or inter-group relation functioning regarding views of 'others', conflict resolution, and collaboration; 15 minutes will be

10

alloted for completion.